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WOMEN OF THE SOUTH.—Illustrated with portraits on steel. By Mary Forrest. Derby & Jackson.

It looks very much as if our publishers were spending too much money on the ornamentation of books, and too little on the improvement of American literature. The volume before us is strong proof of what we have several times said in these columns. It is a bulky book, rich of binding, paper, and gilt—to be set on the centre-table for the admiration of your friends, to be read rarely, and then only in a spirit of the broadest charity. The publishers have done their part well, and generously. We cannot conscientiously say as much for the fair editor. Her intentions were good enough, but she was not equal to so hazardous a labor of love as the one she undertook. She had really good material in her possession, but destroyed its value by mixing it up with so much that was utterly worthless. It were well not to overlook the fact that friendship has no obligations an editor is bound to discharge at the expense of duty and good taste. The object of the book is to place before the reader biographical sketches of, and extracts from, the writings of such women of the South as have distinguished themselves in literature. A very praiseworthy enterprise. But the editor was too kind by half, and instead of adhering strictly to the plan, opened a perfect paradise for the smallest kind of writers. Such persons are most energetic in laying siege to literary fame, and one is not surprised on finding them airing their pretensions in so luxuriously furnished an asylum. Such women as Madame Le Vert, Maria McIntosh, Mrs. Ritchie, Marion Harland, Virginia French, Miss Evans, and Mrs. Southworth, have done something really good for literature, and are a credit, not only to the South, but to the whole country. Nor should we forget the clever author of the "Household of Bouverie." For the rest not much can be said.

A FOREST HYMN, by William Cullen Bryant. Illustrated by John S. Hows. W. A. Townsend & Co., New York.

Every period of human development has a peculiar outlet for the superior as well as the inferior phases of its artistic feeling. Commanding genius cuts its thought on temples as in Egypt, and paints its great frescoes as in Italy, while talents of less power and knowledge confine themselves to vases and other household implements, as in Greece and Rome, and to the illumination of books, missals, and porcelain, as in the middle-ages. There is a place for every lover of something good to write himself or herself down in the language of art. In our time the outlet for minor geniuses in art seems to be designing and drawing illustrations for books; the present facilities in the art of engraving presents ample facilities for them, and it must be said they employ them to advantage. The book at the head of this notice is a case in point. It is a series of designs, or rather drawings, from nature, fitted to Bryant's Forest Hymn, by a young man of some talent. He has selected his objects and drawn them, not, perhaps, impelled so much by poetic feeling as by the mention of the objects in the poem he illustrates, with which he evidently desires to associate his artistic labor. In doing so, he renders good service; he has certainly blended with a fine literary production a commendable amount of artistic ability. Among the illustrations that are original and highly creditable to Mr. Hows, we would mention the vignette formed of leaves inclosing the title, the white-birch bark bearing the motto, and various drawings of plants used marginally (pp. 4, 7, 14, 26, 29, etc.). The publishers have done their part well. The book is in every respect a credit to them. We commend it to the examination of all buyers of holiday-books.

TICKNOR & FIELDS (Boston), have published a neat little blue and gold edition of Mrs. Jameson's "Legend's of the Madonna," alike interesting to the reader of sacred legend and the student of art. The name of Mrs. Jameson is a sufficient guaranty of its merits. Also, from the same house, "Home Ballads," by Whittier, a neat and handsomely got up volume.

PHINNEY, BLAKEMAN & MASON.—This house has recently published an exceedingly interesting and useful work entitled "Railroad Property; a treatise on the construction and management of Railways," by John B. Jervis. Mr. Jervis is a civil engineer, and his object is to impart to managers, engineers, and owners of railroad property, a more thorough knowledge of the value of such property, and the causes that influence it. The history as well as the system of building and managing railways is given in a clear and intelligent manner. "I have aimed," says the author in his preface, "to convey to the reader some impression of the public importance of railways, but have mainly discussed the methods of business involved in their construction and operating management. In regard to construction, it has been my design to give so much of particulars as will enable an intelligent business man to form a judgment of the propriety of the several proceedings, and enable him to decide on their wisdom and expediency, and at the same time afford the junior engineer hints and outlines that may be useful for his consideration."

The same house publish "True Stories of the Days of Washington," and "Bob and Walter," neatly got up and illustrated juveniles, such as our young friends will delight to read during the holidays. Rarely have we read a book in every way so calculated to improve the young mind as "True Stories of the Days of Washington."

CLARK, AUSTIN & MAYNARD, issue a charming litte blue and gold edition of Willis' poems, with a portrait of the author for frontispiece. Young ladies will find this edition exactly suited to their tastes. We have also from the same house, a blue and gold edition of Mrs. Osgood's poems, and "Dickins' Little Folks." The latter is an exquisitely got up series of twelve little books, containing the best selections from as many of the great novelists most celebrated works. Those who know how pleasantly Mr. Dickins can entertain, amuse, and instruct children will not need to be told how valuable a fund of amusement and instruction these volumes contain. We have here all those matchless juvenile creations of the great novelist's prolific brain, each given in a separate volume, beautifully illustrated from drawings by Darley, and engraved in Orr's best style.

W. A. TOWNSEND & CO.—This house has put out for the holidays three cleverly written juveniles—"The White Elephant, or The Hunters of Ava," by William Dalton; "Famous Boys, and how they became Great Men," and "The War Tiger." The first recounts in a pleasant manner the many desperate adventures of little Harry Oliver in Burmah and other parts of India. In addition to being intensely exciting, it contains a good deal of useful information concerning the manners and customs of the Burmans and other Asiatic races. The second sets forth in an entertaining style the process by which some of our greatest men raised themselves to wealth and distinction. The third tells of extraordinary adventures in China, and cannot fail to excite in the young, lofty and chivalrous aspirations.